



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ABP-313802-22

Development	Proposed rear/side elevation extension to cottage and associated site works.
Location	Foorglass, Roundstone, Co Galway
Planning Authority	Galway County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	2260268
Applicant(s)	Peter Meagher.
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse Permission
Type of Appeal	First Party
Appellant(s)	Peter Meagher.
Observer(s)	None.
Date of Site Inspection	30 th May 2023
Inspector	Bríd Maxwell

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. This appeal relates to a site which has a stated area of 1.513 hectares and is located on the southern seaward side of the Regional Road R341 circa 2km to the southeast of Roundstone in County Galway. The R341 is a busy tourist route linking Clifden and Roundstone. The appeal site is occupied by a modest 25.6sq.m one-bed cottage dwelling with whitewashed stone walls and a thatched roof. A small, whitewashed shed with monopitch roof is located to the western side of the house. The site gently undulates from the R341 to the shoreline and is dissected centrally by a tidal stream running north-west / south-east. A small bridge crosses the stream providing access to the dwelling. The dwelling sits in an open coastal landscape with a characteristic pattern of mixed one off rural housing in the immediate locality.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The application as set out in public notices involves permission for proposed rear / side elevation extension 39.74sq.m to existing cottage as well as all ancillary site works and services. The proposal provides for a new living dining kitchen in the new rear extension with a second bedroom and bathroom is incorporated within the existing structure. The proposal will result in a total floor area of 65.32sq.m. Proposed extension is to be finished in stone cladding with blue/black slate roof.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

By order dated 18th May 2022 Galway County Council issued notification of its decision to refuse permission for the following reasons:

The site of the proposed development is located in a coastal rural area designated as a Class 4 landscape, which has a landscape sensitivity rating of 'Special' and a landscape value rating of 'Outstanding' in the current Galway County Development Plan. It is considered that the proposed development by reason of its design, scale and location, occupying an exposed and visually prominent site, would constitute a

visually obstructive form of development in this exposed section of the coastline, incapable of being satisfactorily assimilated into this sensitive class 4 coastal rural landscape. Furthermore, the proposed development would contravene materially provisions of the said county plan, in particular Policy LCM1, Objective LCM1, Objective LCM2 and DM Standard 6. Accordingly to grant the proposed development would seriously interfere with the character of the landscape, would detract from the visual amenity of the area, would militate against the preservation of the rural environment, would contravene materially a development policy, objectives and a development management standard contained in the currently county development plan, would set an undesirable precedent for similar future development in the area, and therefore would be contrary to the proposed planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

Planner's report notes the planning history on the appeal site and expresses concern that the proposal will more than double the size of the dwellinghouse. It is asserted that the proposal be reason of its design scale and location occupying an exposed and visually prominent site would constitute an obtrusive form of development. Refusal was recommended as per subsequent decision.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

No other reports

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

No submissions.

3.4. Third Party Observations

No observations

4.0 Planning History

17/202 (PL07.248417) Third Party Appeal withdrawn). Retention and completion of a one bedroom cottage and all ancillary site works including access, foul drainage and landscaping.

16/336 Extension of duration for refurbishment of a one bed cottage including demolition of all non-original extensions, reconstruction of stone walls and thatched roof, a new septic tank treatment system and associated works. Previous reference **09/1532** (gross floor space 28sq.m) Refused on grounds of flood risk.

09/1532 PL07.238152 The Board granted permission for refurbishment of an original one bed cottage including demolition of all non-original extensions, reconstruction of stone walls and thatched roof, a new septic tank treatment system and all associated site works and landscaping. I note that while the Board's reporting inspector had recommended refusal on grounds that the residential use had ceased, visual impact, traffic hazard and pollution risk, the Board considered that a residential use had long existed on the site, and relied on technical reports on the file in relation to effluent treatment. A condition of the permission restricted further extensions to the cottage subject to planning permission.

16/336 Extension of duration for refurbishment of one bed cottage including demolition of all non-original extensions, re-construction of stone walls and thatched roof, new septic tank treatment system and all associated site works and landscaping. Refused on grounds of flood risk.

02/4980 Permission refused for completion of existing construction works to an original thatched cottage and for the proposed extension and alterations to the existing structure and for a new biocycle unit and raised percolation area and improvements to the existing entrance.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Development Plan

The Galway County Development Plan 2022 refers.

The site is within the Coastal Landscape as set out in Map 8.1. Landscape Character Area designated as Special in terms of Landscape Sensitivity Map 8.2.

LCM 1 Preservation of Landscape Character

Preserve and enhance the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation and enhancement, where possible of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.

LCM2 Landscape Sensitivity

The Planning Authority shall have regard to the landscape sensitivity classification of sites in the consideration of any significant development proposals and, where necessary, require a Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment to accompany such proposals. This shall be balanced against the need to develop key strategic infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan.

“LCM3 Landscape Sensitivity Ratings

Consideration of landscape sensitivity ratings shall be an important factor in determining development uses in areas of the County. In areas of high landscape sensitivity, the design and the choice of location of proposed development in the landscape will also be critical considerations. “

The Regional Road R341 is designated as a Maritime Scenic Route.

PVSR 1 – Protected Views and Scenic Routes

Preserve the protected views and scenic routes as detailed in Maps 8.3 and 8.4 from development that in the view of the Planning Authority would negatively impact on said protected views and scenic routes. This shall be balanced against the need to develop key infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan.

DM Standard 4: House Extensions (Urban and Rural)

Proposed extensions shall:

- In general, be subordinate to the existing dwelling in its size, unless in exceptional cases, a larger extension compliments the existing dwelling in its design and massing;
- reflect the window proportions, detailing and finishes, texture, materials and colour unless a high quality contemporary and innovatively designed extension is proposed;
- not have an adverse impact on the amenities of adjoining properties through undue overlooking, undue overshadowing and/or an over dominant visual impact; and
- carefully consider site coverage to avoid unacceptable loss of private open space.

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

The site is not within a designated area. The nearest Natura 2000 sites are Slyne Head Peninsula SAC within 600m and Slyne Head to Ardmore Point Islands SPA within 500m.

5.3. EIA Screening

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development it is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. The need for EIA can, therefore, be excluded at preliminary examination and a screening determination is not required.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

The appeal is submitted by Hughes Planning and Development Consultants and is summarised as follows:

- Proposal represents an appropriately scaled and consciously designed residential extension which will present no undue impact on the visual amenity of the immediate and wider locality.
- Proposal provides for modern living standards.
- Single storey extension has been specifically positioned so as to reduce visibility and to ensure no undue impact on either the visual amenity or character of the area. The provisions of the development plan are duly considered noting scale, mass and width of the extension has been designed in accordance with Policy LCM1, Objective LCM2 and DM Standard 6.
- A number of precedents have been identified both for residential extensions, ancillary shed facilities and residential dwellings within the immediate vicinity.
- Proposal provides for a significantly improved standard of residential amenity. Existing dwelling comprises 3 rooms with front door opening directly to the kitchen living room and both the bedroom and bathroom accessed directly from same. Revised proposal provides the benefits associated with modern living accommodation including provision of an entrance hall to allow a degree of separation between the various rooms and significantly reduce the cramped nature of the current layout also providing for rear access.
- Whilst the proposal represents a significant increase relative to the floor area of the existing dwelling it is lower than what would generally be considered exempt for a rear extension 40sq.m.
- Scale design and form has been consciously developed to wholly limit the visual impact of the extension. Due regard to the Galway County Council Design Guidelines for Single Houses.

- Extension seeks to replicate the simple and geometrically regular form of the existing cottage to achieve a situation whereby the finished dwelling is perceived as a unified composition of building form as opposed to a clearly distinguishable modern addition to an extensively refurbished period dwelling.
- Regarding Policy LCM1 and Objective LCM1 while the proposal will have a definite visual impact on the local landscape it is not considered that this impact will be in any way unduly negative. Visual impact assessment clearly illustrates the manner in which the extension is generally screened by the existing property so as to limit its apparent scale and by association impact on the immediate landscape.
- Proposed design appropriately disguises the extent of development proposed.
- Whilst the extension is larger than the existing cottage it appears subordinate to the cottage when viewed from the immediate and wider public realm in. Associated site works including landscaping and screen planting also serve to improve the visual amenity of the site and maintain an attractive rural/coastal aesthetic.
- Visual impact assessment imagery presents a key visual representation of the proposed development as it will be seen from principal vantage points along the R341.
- Numerous precedents for development within coastal rural areas on lands designated as class 4 landscape.
- Proposal represents a positive precedent for the extension of existing built form within the area with the appropriate attention to rural design guidance evident in the submitted drawings.

6.2. Planning Authority Response

The Planning Authority did not respond to the grounds of appeal.

7.0 Assessment

- 7.1. The key issues arising in this appeal relates to the design and scale of the proposal given the landscape sensitivities of the site location and the size of the extension relative to the size of the existing dwelling on the site. I note that whilst the Planning Authority decision was taken in the context of the previous plan the Galway County Development Plan 2022 now refers. The appeal site lies within the coastal landscape character area classified as 'special' in terms of landscape sensitivity, where design is a critical consideration. The R341 is also part of the maritime scenic route. The key design management considerations in relation to residential extensions are set out in DM Standard 4 which requires inter alia that "in general residential extensions should be subordinate to the existing dwelling in its size, unless in exceptional cases a larger extension compliments the existing dwelling in its design and massing." I note that the proposed extension (39.74sq.m) represents a substantial increase in floor area to the existing dwelling (26.5sq.m) and is clearly not subordinate in size. I consider however that the proposal represents an exceptional situation given the extremely limited size of the existing dwelling. In my view having regard to the established use the provision of additional floor area to improve the standard of residential amenity on this site is justified in this situation. I consider that in terms of the proposed design it complements the existing dwelling in its design and massing. As regards the visual impact on the scenic qualities of the locality and on views from the adjacent scenic route I consider that the design mitigation including proposed landscaping will appropriately integrate the extension to this context.
- 7.2. Regarding the wastewater treatment system, I note the report by Enda O Malley and Associates, Chartered Consulting Engineers which sets out that the existing domestic wastewater treatment unit is a BAF PE5 Tricel Tank located 20m to the northwest rear of the existing house and has sufficient capacity to cater for the proposed development. The percolation area is 5m south of the treatment unit and appears to be in good working order. The report notes that the vicinity of the treatment system was visibly dry, firm underfoot and free from odour. As noted at Section 4 above the Board's reporting inspector on PL07.238152 expressed concern regarding pollution risk from effluent treatment arising from soil conditions on site

and proximity to the shoreline. The Board however had regard to the limited size of the cottage and technical proposals in relation to installation operation and maintenance of the system. I note that the floor area of the dwelling following extension will be 65sq.m. which is still a modest dwelling. I note that the proposal does not involve any changes to the existing treatment system. Having regard to the established use on the site I consider that there is no basis for refusal on grounds of pollution risk, which is in any case a new issue in terms of the appeal. Given the constraints and environmental sensitivities of the site I consider that any future extension on the site should be resisted.

7.3 As regard flood risk as noted in the planner's report a site specific flood risk assessment carried out in relation to the previous application on the site 17/202 by IE Consulting. I have reviewed the documents in relation to that case and I note that the report identified that the primary potential flood risk for the site attributed to a significant coastal / tidal event in the Atlantic and in the Foorglass Stream. The report noted that the location of the cottage and wastewater treatment system would not be impacted by an extreme current scenario 0.5%AEP or 0.1%AEP coastal / tidal flood event. The existing cottage is 5.01m OD which is 1.26m above the current scenario 0.1%AEP flood level of 3.75m OD. In consideration of current coastal / tidal flood scenario the location of the cottage and wastewater treatment system fall within delineated flood zone C. The cottage would not be impacted by an extreme high end future scenario 0.5% AEP or 0.1% AEP coastal / tidal flood event as at 5.01m OD it is 0.26m above the high end future scenario 0.1% AEP flood level of 4.75m OD. The wastewater treatment system falls within delineated high end future scenario flood zone however stone wall along the boundary protects the system against extreme high end future scenario coastal / tidal flooding.

7.4 On the matter of Appropriate Assessment I note the Appropriate assessment screening report submitted with the application by Aster Environmental Consultants. The nearest sites to the proposed development are Slyne Head Peninsula SAC 0.6km and Slyne Head to Ardmore Point Islands SPA 0.5km. It is considered that having regard to the small scale of the proposal no potential impacts are predicted. Having regard to the nature, scale and location of the proposal, the nature of the

receiving environment, and the proximity to the nearest European site, it is concluded that no Appropriate Assessment issues arise as the proposal would not be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.

8.0 Recommendation

8.1. I have read the submissions on the file, visited the site and had due regard to the development plan and all other matters arising. I recommend that the Board overturn the decision of the planning authority and grant permission subject to the following conditions.

9.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to the location of the site and established residential use and to the pattern of development in the area, it is considered that the proposal would be compatible with the visual and scenic amenities of the area and would not impact unduly on the special landscape. No appropriate assessment issues would arise. The proposal would thus accord with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and lodged with the application except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. Notwithstanding the exempted development provisions of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 and any statutory provision replacing or amending them, no development falling within Class 1 or class 3 of Schedule 2, Part 1 of those regulations shall take place within the curtilage of the house without a prior grant of planning permission.

Reason: In the interest of the amenities of the area.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.

Bríd Maxwell
Planning Inspector

02 June 2023